

Date: September 15, 2016
To: University Area Commission, University Area Review Board
CC: Kevin Wheeler, Mark Dravillas, Dan Ferdelman
From: Christopher Lohr, Columbus Planning Division
Re: University Area Planning Overlay Update - Summary of Feedback

The following summarizes the planning process as well as feedback received during the comment period held from July 25 to August 25, 2016 as part of the University Area Planning Overlay Update.

During the week of July 10, the Planning Division sent notice of a proposed code update in the form of 1,213 letters to owners representing 1,998 parcels in the University District. Letters were sent to the owners of parcels located within the two proposed mixed use subdistricts as well as to the owners of properties located within 125 ft. of said parcels. The letter provided information about how to comment, where to find materials online, and the location and date of the public open house.

As part of the outreach effort, Planning staff sent an email on July 12 to a list of 250 stakeholders developed during the planning process for the University District Plan with information about the upcoming open house and website with additional information. A follow up email was sent to this list on the afternoon of July 25 as a reminder of the open house taking place that evening.

The Planning Division held an open house on the evening of July 25 to present draft recommendations and receive feedback from the community. At least 80 residents, developers, and property owners attended the meeting. At that meeting a total of 58 comments were received regarding the five (5) topic areas:

1. Design Guidelines
2. Parking
3. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
4. Height
5. Potential Expansion of the University Area Review Board (UARB)

Additionally, a public survey was posted to the project website along with the same materials presented at the open house, in PDF format. The survey was available from July 25 through August 25, during which 31 respondents provided 142 total comments regarding the five (5) topic areas. The comments were divided into either “support” or “don’t support”, with the opportunity to provide additional text feedback as well. The results, by topic area, are to follow.

Separate from the survey and open house comments received, staff also received a letter from a local attorney who wrote on behalf of eleven (11) property owners in the University District. The letter expressed concerns about a number of aspects of the proposed Overlay standards. Those concerns will be responded to directly since they did not correspond directly with the format of the open house and surveys.



0 – 20	Very Low Support
20-40	Low Support
40-50	Balanced Support (-)
50-60	Balanced Support (+)
60-80	High Support
80-100	Very High Support

Design Guidelines

A high degree of support was expressed for the design guidelines overall, with very high support from those respondents that attended the open house. A common refrain was that the guidelines should be strictly adhered to by the University Area Review Board rather than seen as policy guidance.

Online respondents	59% support	Balanced Support (+)
Open House respondents	86% support	Very High Support
Overall	65% support	High Support

Parking

The parking recommendation received balanced support skewing slightly negative, with low support for the proposal in particular among respondents that attended the open house. Although this code update is specifically for those areas of the University District that are commercial, many of the comments referenced more general problems with parking that pertain to the residential areas of the district. The only comment regarding the proposed commercial parking reduction was that it should be lower for restaurants. The majority of the comments focused on the residential requirements, i.e. 0.5 spaces per bed. These concerns were either that this ratio was too low or that a “per bed” model was not enforceable and that a model based on either square footage or FAR would be preferable.

Online respondents	46% support	Balanced Support (-)
Open House respondents	29% support	Low Support
Overall	40% support	Balanced Support (-)

Floor Area Ratio

The floor area ratio (FAR) recommendations received high support overall, with very high support from those that attended the open house. Some respondents thought that there should be a bonus for preservation of green or open spaces, or a reduced bonus so that the maximum became 1.2 instead of 1.4.

Online respondents	63% support	High Support
Open House respondents	80% support	Very High Support
Overall	68% support	High Support

Height

The height recommendations received high support overall, with very high support from respondents at the open house and a slightly positive balanced feedback from online respondents. Most responses were in regards to the NMX subdistrict where staff recommended a 45 ft. height limit. Some respondents felt that this was too low while other thought that the prevailing 35 ft. height district was more appropriate in these areas. Most comments also expressed support for the removal of the step-back, step-up provision of the existing code as recommended by staff.

Online respondents	53% support	Balanced Feedback (+)
Open House respondents	89% support	Very High Support
Overall	62% support	High Support

Potential Expansion of University Area Review Board

Staff requested feedback on whether the UARB should be expanded to include all areas proposed for the NMX and RMX subdistricts. This question was met with high support overall for expanding the UARB, with slightly positive balanced feedback received from open house respondents. The most common concern for those supporting expansion was that it be coupled with changes to the composition of the UARB membership so that, in their opinion, it better represented the community. Property owners were also concerned with the elevated level of review, especially considering the fact that adjacent residential areas are not currently being considered for expansion as part of Phase I.

Online respondents	77% support	High Support
Open House respondents	60% support	Balanced Feedback (+)
Overall	71% support	High Support